

in 2001 to cosponsor a resolution which passed the House and Senate to recognize the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

Beyond the Ellis Island Medals, NECO has provided leadership in a wide range of humanitarian and national civic work. This includes raising more than \$1 million to renovate and refurbish the Immigrant Wall of Honor on Ellis Island, a wall which contains the names of more than 200,000 immigrants to the United States who first aimed to begin the American dream on Ellis Island.

One of the best-known of NECO's programs is the Forum Children's Foundation. This project involves sponsoring children from various third world nations who are in need of urgent medical assistance to come to the United States and receive this care. To date more than 30 children have been provided with surgeries and related care that could be characterized as either life saving or life changing in nature. The Foundation assumes the responsibility for the costs associated with the care and the transportation necessary to receive it. In this endeavor they have made a genuine difference in the lives of not only the children but their families as well.

NECO in its history has been deeply involved as an advocate to combat the rising local, state, and national problem of hate crimes. It began in response to one of the most heinous of all hate crimes that was committed against James Byrd in Texas. NECO in addition to helping the Byrd family with the funeral costs, also established two scholarships a year in conjunction with the James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Healing. NECO has worked closely with the sponsors of comprehensive hate crime prevention legislation in both the House and the Senate working to educate and inform the Congress about the need to prevent hate crimes by providing law enforcement with adequate resources and responsibility. Today in our nation we average nearly 25 hate crimes a day and it is obvious that we must do more to combat the problem.

NECO is constant in its efforts to combat negative ethnic and racial stereotyping. This has included work with the Family Exchange Peace Program. This program brings thousands of school children and their families together to raise awareness about the diverse racial and ethnic heritage of New York City as well as to encourage racial, ethnic and cultural harmony.

NECO also is responsible for one of the most important Italian American organizations, the Coalition of Italo-American Associations. The Coalition representing 143 organizations around the nation with a membership of some 1.5 million works in conjunction with NECO on the key mission to fight discrimination including negative media stereotyping, and to spotlight the contributions which Italian Americans make and continue to make to America.

NECO also is responsible for the Forum Club, a leading business organization in New York City, which sponsors monthly high-level programs with prominent speakers from government, media and business.

Over the past 20 years NECO has distinguished itself in many humanitarian programs and initiatives. It has stayed true to its mission to promote the strength of diversity and to promote understanding and harmony. Its positive mission and message is challenged so often by some harsh realities of modern society such as hate crimes and discrimination, yet

NECO's strength of character and sense of commitment has been unwavering.

It is a special honor for me to recognize NECO and its great work these past twenty years. I salute NECO's leadership including its Board of Directors, staff and volunteers and most especially their Chairman, Bill Fugazy. NECO is an outstanding model of an organization which does so well by doing such good.

THE LOSS OF MASTER SERGEANT RICHARD L. FERGUSON

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sorrow that I rise to recognize the death of Master Sergeant Richard L. Ferguson, United States Army—a brave soldier who served with dignity and honor in Iraq. I join his family and the people of Rhode Island in mourning this great loss.

On Tuesday, March 30, Master Sergeant Ferguson was killed in Samarra, Iraq, when the vehicle in which he was riding overturned in a non-hostile incident. He served with 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group out of Fort Carson, Colorado. Raised in Coventry, Rhode Island, Master Sergeant Ferguson joined the Army at the age of 17 and served his nation honorably as a member of the elite Special Forces. His assignments sent him around the globe on important and challenging missions, and it was while stationed in Germany that he met his wife, Marianne. Marianne now lives in Colorado with their children, Jonathan, Jordan, and Jason.

Master Sergeant Ferguson's many years in the Army demonstrate his dedication to our nation's freedom, a belief shared by others in his family that were also called to service; his father, Lee F. Ferguson, Sr., served in Korea, his brother, Lee Jr., was a member of the 82nd Airborne, and his brother Eric is in the Air National Guard. Richard Ferguson also leaves a sister, JoAnn Phillips of Coventry, and a daughter, Audrey. Those who knew him well spoke highly of his love of his family, and his patriotism. He was described as a leader who demonstrated humility, commitment and courage.

His loss causes us to reflect on the bravery demonstrated by our men and women in uniform as they carry out their obligations in the face of danger. When their nation called them to duty to preserve freedom, liberty and the security of their neighbors, they answered without hesitation. We remember those who have fallen not only as soldiers, but also as patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. May we keep their loved ones in our thoughts and prayers as they struggle to endure this difficult period and mourn the heroes America has lost.

We will continue to hope for the safe and speedy return of all of our troops serving throughout the world.

IN RECOGNITION OF PIEDMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S STUDENT COUNCIL

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Piedmont Elementary School of Piedmont, Alabama. This fine elementary school has established a Student Council in order to teach its students the importance of government and the democratic principles. As I read the letters of some of its young officers, I know that this experiment has been successful. These young people, under the leadership of student council sponsors Miss Leslie Gary and Mrs. Melinda Whaley, are indeed a credit to their school, their community and their state.

As a reward for their service on the Piedmont Elementary School Student Council and to further their education about our American government, these students will be traveling to Washington, D.C., on April 27 to May 1, 2004. The Alabama Legislature has designated them as "Ambassadors of Goodwill."

I welcome these Alabama Ambassadors of Goodwill and their principal, John H. McGill, as the Piedmont Elementary School Student Council visits our Nation's Capital. I salute these young people for their accomplishments.

THANKING SISTER IMELDA FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF GUID- ANCE, SERVICE, AND LEADER- SHIP

HON. DAVID VITTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Mr. VITTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sister Imelda Moriarty, Principal of St. Catherine of Siena School in Metairie, Louisiana. Sister Imelda is retiring after thirty-five years of teaching at St. Catherine. She is a pillar of the Louisiana educational community and will be sorely missed.

Sister Imelda began teaching at St. Catherine of Siena School in 1969 with a class of forty-one students. She became principal in 1974, and she will retire as principal in May of 2004. Since the arrival of Sister Imelda, St. Catherine has become the largest nonpublic school in Louisiana.

Generation after generation of children from the New Orleans area have attended and will attend St. Catherine. Under the guidance of Sister Imelda, thousands of students have received excellent educations and have become positive contributors to their communities. More importantly, these students have developed a moral, ethical and spiritual foundation to help guide them through life. It is through Sister Imelda's faith that she has become such a positive and powerful source in the lives of so many children.

My wife and I are both personally affected by the retirement of Sister Imelda. Three of our four children attend St. Catherine, and Sister Imelda's departure will be a very emotional event for students and parents alike. Younger students will miss her open arms and candy